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ABSTRACT

Statewide review of new academic programs in now a fairly common phenomenon, but serious review of existing programs is a much rarer practice. Now that economic conditions threaten to leave many programs stranded, we face the uncomfortable fact that institutions are very sensitive to questions raised about the legitimacy of existing programs. Even with heavier institutional or multicampus system involvement in the review of existing programs, there will still remain several important roles for the statewide agency. They must not yet undertake self-evaluation; they must monitor the quality of the self-evaluation processes that are underway; and they must ensure that even high quality self-evaluation is placed in the broader context of state, regional, and national needs. Twenty-eight coordinating boards are engaged in some form of review of existing programs, with two other boards having such procedures under development. Issues important to address are: (1) which programs to review; (2) the criteria for review of existing programs; (3) strategies and procedures for existing programs; (4) board start-up strategies; and (5) costs and benefits of review of existing programs. (Author/KE)

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CRITERIA AND STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL CLOSURE

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PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE

While statewide review of new academic programs is by now a fairly common phenomenon, serious review of existing programs is a much rarer practice. There are some obvious reasons for this. Until recently expansion was the name of the game, and most board attentions were concentrated on which new programs were going where. If mistakes were sometimes made and new programs approved before there was actual justification for them, usually the incoming tide of expansion ultimately covered them up. Now that the tide is turning and threatening to leave many programs stranded and visible as it recedes, we face the uncomfortable fact that it is doubly sensitive to raise questions about the legitimacy of existing programs. Faculty have already been hired and some of them have become tenured, students have been accepted into the programs with expectations of finishing them, and some are occupying dormitory beds, helping to pay off construction bond debts; specialized library or laboratory facilities may have been acquired.

Above all, the notion of campus autonomy is much more deeply involved when it is a question, not of denying permission for a new program, but of recommending or ruling that an existing program be terminated. Academic programs lie at the heart of the enterprise and it should be understandable that

statewide movements in the direction of review of existing programs cause deeply felt concerns and even hostile reactions.

Yet, given the need to find the means for reallocation of resources, such statewide intervention seems inevitable. For one thing, the institutions themselves have not seemed anxious to grasp this nettle; Glenny's survey of institutional presidents (1975) indicated, for example, that only 3 percent had engaged in extensive graduate program elimination or consolidation between 1968 and 1974. Another 27 percent reported that "some" elimination or consolidation of graduate programs had occurred. The corresponding estimates for the period 1974 to 1980 were 9 percent and 36 percent, indicating a near doubling of intent. (Insert Table 1 here).

The record seems somewhat better when one turns to system headquarters of multi-campus institutions. There Lee and Dorn (1975) report that since 1970 seven of the nine large systems they studied had initiated programs for the periodic review of existing graduate and professional programs. Five or six of these systems agreed that their review of existing programs had become more inclusive and more stringent, including considerations of quality, costs and campus missions. Furthermore, seven of the nine systems estimated that their review procedures would become even more inclusive and more stringent over the next ten years. (Insert Table 2 here).

However, even with heavier institutional or multi-campus system involvement with review of existing programs, there will

Table 5

										1968-	1974-
										1974	1980
										(%)	(%)

Review of Training Programs

5. Current herpesvirinycide procedures for periodic review of existing academic programs

	Done by	By whom		
a. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
b. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

6. Major budgetary requirement of priority training of existing programs

a. [illegible] No requirement
b. [illegible] Can move requirement, but not negative projection
c. [illegible] No requirement and gain of negative projection
d. [illegible] Other

7. Changes since 1968 in herpesvirinycide review of existing programs

a. [illegible] Liability or tax change
b. [illegible] Basic curriculum
c. [illegible] Basic curriculum req., based on academic quality
d. [illegible] Basic curriculum req., based on [illegible], etc.
e. [illegible] Basic curriculum req., based on fiscal criteria
f. [illegible] Other

8. Expected changes in herpesvirinycide review

	Basic	Basic
a. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
b. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
c. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
d. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
e. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Examples: S.A.Jain and S.D. Brown, [illegible]
See Herpesviruses: Investigations, Conferences

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

of being "in trouble"; that to the initial quantitative criteria would be added qualitative and other dimensions; and that a whole host of possible extenuating factors would be considered before program termination decisions would be reached. Quantitative indicators often included program productivity, costs, student demand, and extent of program duplication within the state.

West Virginia uses a mixed set of indicators and a very particular way of dealing with them. Using cost, output, institutional priority and program quality, each institution is asked to make forced ratings about each program. Sixty percent of the programs should be rated as normal on each of the four variables; twenty percent should then be placed on either side of the normal range. Each institution should then select which programs it wishes to have reviewed in depth.

While the above methods offer various ways to get an administrative handle on a difficult problem, they suffer from the common defect that the program evaluations tend to be of isolated doctorate/ programs at different institutions and do not necessarily involve the statewide orientation and competences of the state board. Ideally, at the very least, all doctorates in a given subject area would be evaluated at the same time; at the very best, this would be done for whole field clusters at a time, in recognition of the interdependence of advanced work in related fields. The New York state review started out with pilot studies in single subject areas: a history

review for the humanities/social sciences, and a chemistry review for the natural sciences. With later reviews in astronomy, English, and physics, criticisms were made of the single subject approach and next year's review will be of all foreign language doctorates and those in comparative literature. The Florida Board of Regents has some proposed new guidelines which anticipate using HEGIS clusters as the means of selection.

One final observation of program selection: a Wisconsin document speaks well to the danger of allowing the quantitative tripwires to be the exclusive channel through which programs are chosen for more intensive analysis.

> For a variety of judgmental reasons, administrators or planning committees for a particular institution might ask for more intensive review of a program which had not been selected through the audit process. For example, the anticipated retirement or departure of key faculty members in a given program might create a presumption that review of the program should be undertaken prior to restaffing; or a regularly scheduled site visit by an accreditation team might catalyze an institutional audit and review of a program in conjunction with the preparation of documents for the visitors; or planning studies concerning the minimum staffing which should be maintained for the essential programs of an institution might generate need for review of particular programs; or recommendations from system-wide or institutional task forces on curriculum changes could also generate need for program review. (quoted in Barak, 1975).

Criteria for Review of Existing Programs

It would be possible to make this into a very lengthy paper ringing the changes on all the combinations of criteria being used or proposed by state agencies. But to some extent

that has already been done through numerous extracts from state documents included in Bob Barak's paper, "A Survey of State-Level Academic Program Review Policies and Procedures for Higher Education," April 1, 1975. Furthermore, our planned monograph will be a much more appropriate vehicle for the nuanced details which may be of considerable interest to others around the country engaged in roughly the same pursuits (at the multi-campus and institutional levels as well).

Here, then, I propose merely to do two things:

1) list the ten criteria for program discontinuance suggested by the ECS report, Coordination or Chaos, (1973), along with a tally from Barak's paper on how many states responding to his survey were using each criterion; and

2) reproduce two pages from the Final Report of the Montana Commission on Postsecondary Education (1974) which lists some 22 possible criteria to be employed in reviewing existing programs, plus an additional eight when graduate programs are involved! If most of these criteria were to be applied seriously, the Montana Board of Regents could probably use enough additional staff to lower the unemployment rate by several degrees.

The ten criteria suggested by the ECS report and the number of states reporting to Barak to be using them are as follows:

1) the number of graduates from the program in each of the last five years (14 states);
2) the number of students enrolled is the program (entry and dropout rates) (10 states);
3) the size of classes and the cost of courses identified as integral elements in the program (4 states);
4) cost per program graduate (8 states);
5) faculty work load (2 states);
6) program quality as reflected by its regional or national reputation, faculty qualifications and the level of position achieved by graduates of the program (8 states);
7) total production of a program's graduates from all institutions in the state, region and/or nation (2 states);
8) the economies and improvements in quality to be achieved by consolidation and/or elimination of the program (5 states);
9) general student interest and demand trends for the program (9 states); and
10) the appropriateness of the program to a changed institutional role or mission (9 states).

The thirty possible criteria listed by the Montana Commission are as follows:

Appropriate criteria for the review of existing programs will be developed over a period of time and will be subject to change as conditions alter. Therefore, we hesitate to specify them but believe they should take account of the following factors:

a. number of graduates from the program in each of the last five years.

b. number of students enrolled in the program for each of the last five years, rate of completion, the rate of attrition, ratio of enrollment to degree productivity.

c. the number of students not enrolled in the program but who were served by it for each of the last five years.

d. the size of classes identified as integral elements in the program.

e. for colleges, universities and community colleges, cost per credit hour of the courses identified as integral elements in the program (upper division, lower division and graduate).

f. for vocational-technical centers, cost per contact hours for courses identified as integral elements in the program.

g. cost per program graduate.

h. faculty/instructor workload.

i. faculty/instructor qualifications.

j. reputation and intrinsic value of the program.

k. positions achieved by graduates of the program.

l. positions attained by persons enrolled in the program who may have achieved their educational objectives without completing requirements for the degree or certificate.

m. total production of graduates in the program area from all institutions in the state (and when appropriate, in the region and/or nation).

n. economic and/or qualitative improvements which might be achieved by consolidation and/or elimination of the program.

o. general student interest, evaluation and demand for the program; morale of students in the program.

p. indicators of present and future demand for graduates of the program.

q. appropriateness of the program to the mission of the institution.

r. any needs for other programs of higher priority which might be funded fully or partially from savings realized by discontinuance of the program under review.

a. adequacy of current services, particularly library, laboratory and educational facilities;

b. compatibility with state plans;

c. similarity to programs offered at any of the other units;

d. relevance of the program to its objectives.

In addition, the following criteria should be applied to the review of graduate programs by the Regents:

a. average time of completion of those to whom the degree has been awarded;

b. benefits accruing to the institution and the state independent of enrollment as degree producers;

c. proportion of departmental resources devoted to the program;

d. sources of funding — state, federal, etc.;

e. qualifications of faculty;

f. qualifications and backgrounds of students attracted to the program;

g. relative impact upon undergraduate programs;

h. availability of similar graduate programs at other units.

Decisions Concerning the Establishment, [illegible]

The National Board on Graduate Education, in a passage quoted with approval by a recent DOE Task Force on Graduate Education (1979), commented on dangers associated with over-simplified use of quality, productivity and manpower criteria:

> 1. A single measure of quality should not be applied to many diverse programs--programs that may be serving the needs of entirely different students for entirely different forms of graduate education. Multiple indicators of quality, suitable in relation to different programs objectives, should be developed.
>
> 2. Statewide planners should resist the temptation to apply simplistic formulae to developing programs, such as "eliminate any program that has not produced more than two doctorates within the last two years." Such statistical measures may flag programs in need of review, but no program should be eliminated on the basis of simple statistical alone.
>
> 3. When evaluating graduate programs, planners should not attempt supply-and-demand labor market assessment, since the mobility of the highly educated is certainly underestimated such analyses. A more appropriate criterion, we believe, is measured access to graduate education for residents within the state (or within the region, through reciprocal programs).
>
> Even as we urged the federal government not to react to current labor market imbalances, we do urge state governments to take a long-term view in supporting graduate universities. The lengthy process of building excellent graduate programs can be undone very quickly, and when those programs need to be built again, as some of them surely will, the costs will be enormous. (1980 National Board on Graduate Education, DOE, p. 89).

Such disclaimers on manpower planning may be well deserved, but in some fields like history doctorates, the employment picture has become so grim that new forms must be playing at least an implicit role when it comes to

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

come to dominate its deliberations; on the other hand, the staff must be hypersensitive to the danger that either in reality or in appearance, the advisory committee comes to be viewed more as the "lap dog" of the central staff than as a major source of candid criticism from the institutions. Realizing that there will be dangers either way, I would urge serious consideration for the possibility that some institutional representative and not a member of the central staff chair the meetings.

One of the interesting aspects of the New York doctoral review process has been the role of the Doctoral Council, a 13 member group of graduate deans (or equivalents), with two from SUNY, two from CUNY and nine from private universities. Its predecessor body endorsed the need for the prestigious Fleming Committee to make its report "Meeting the Needs of Doctoral Education" (1973). This report provided the basis for the Regents Position Paper No. 19 which in turn led to the present doctoral review. The institutional representatives on the Doctoral Council have, then, from the beginning been in on the process and most of them continue to support it today. Some have had some difficulties with their home institutions which seemed to fear that they had been too "socialized" to the statewide point of view.

The Doctoral Council, chaired by Ted Hollander, played a major role in reviewing the early pilot runs, offering sub-

stantive as well as procedural recommendations. A few institutions, however, were concerned that if this body, with their representatives on board, took substantive positions, they (the institutions) might be inhibited in later expressing strong positions to the contrary. So there was a period during subsequent subject reviews when the role of the Doctoral Council was reduced to that of commenting on matters of due process only. This, though, created a situation in which a marginal strengthening of an institution's freedom to react after the Commissioner's decision on the rating committee's recommendation (now tempered only by staff advice) had been purchased at the price of the institutions' collective advice to the Commissionar before his decision. According to reports just received in July, the Doctoral Council will revert back to its former status of rendering both substantive and procedural comments. If all this sounds complicated, that's because it is! (The New York review process is further described in the Chronicle of Higher Education of January 27, 1975 and in an excellent article by Amy Plumer (1975).)

Concerning any roles for members of the statewide boards, I would guess that, sooner or later, given the controversial nature of the process, they will be involved in one way or another. One respondent to our questionnaire reported that his board members felt distinctly uneasy in the face of these intimate academic matters. On their consolidated governing

board, they had been used to worrying about budgets and buildings and football teams. One answer to this problem, not without dangers of its own, is to create a standing committee of board members on academic programs, so that over a period of time and with careful staff assistance, some members can build up a real sophistication in these areas. Hopefully, they will not become so sophisticated that they will be tempted casually to substitute their own private preferences for careful judgments by outside consultants and board staff!

Board Start-Up Strategies

In terms of general strategy questions, boards contemplating starting up the process might ask themselves whether it is better to commence in low key or to come on very strong. Some shock-ridden New York institutions might plead for the former, on a variety of grounds. For one thing, some were surprised to find that so-called pilot runs were leading to immediate operational decisions. The pilot studies, qua pilots, accomplished their purposes, for subsequent subject reviews were much improved processes. But high degrees of anxiety and some hostility might have been greatly lessened during the admittedly imperfect early procedures if all concerned had not seen real bullets placed in the chambers of Commissioner Nyquist's weapons.

Another argument for a mellow beginning to the review process is that negative findings constitute, in a certain sense, evidence of some boards' own earlier acts of negligence. The New York Regents, for example, had formal roles of approval for most of these doctoral programs on the way up; if they, along with most of the rest of us, can be excused for not having anticipated problems of excess supply, there is no such general excuse for their having earlier taken their role as "quality-controllers" so casually. Having mid-wifed, as it were, at the birth of some of these marginal doctoral programs, they might be considered to have a moral obligation to exercise their relatively recent conversion to the cause of very high standards with some compassion and circumspection.

Some institutions have also opposed immediate operational decisions on subject fields in an ad hoc manner. Rather they urge, as mentioned earlier, that related fields be evaluated in clusters; that recommendations on given subject fields be given to the institutions or multi-campus systems in question with the opportunity to provide a coherent institutional response, taking into consideration the relation of the field in question to the central core missions of the campus, its relations with other inter-dependent fields on campus, and, if possible, folding in the particular response to the institution's (and system's) own long-range planning efforts. While such a patterm might invite lengthy institutional minuets before "Action

with a capital "A" finally occurs, it would go a long way toward restoring the concept of institutional integrity in the program review process. And there would be nothing at all to prevent state boards with adequate powers from still finding at the end that the institutional response did not satisfy all the necessary concerns. What would have been lost would be time and some possible savings from earlier rather than later termination. But within reasonable limits issues of time should not be used to bypass important procedural points unless elements of outright fraud require immediate intervention. And I happen to believe that the net savings to the state of earlier program termination are quite modest. (The SUNY-Albany history graduate program, for example, has about 35 students, about 2 to 3 of whom receive doctorates each year. There had been plans to increase the output to 5 or 6 per year. One doesn't know what staff reductions might occur among the 22-25 faculty if the doctorate is eliminated. One suspects there would be few dismissals but rather a freeze on new hiring and some shifts in teaching assignments.)

On the other hand, consumer protection and fiscal retrenchment are popular items these days in state government circles, and a board struggling for political survival may feel in need of surrendering some institutional goodwill in order to purchase some life insurance. There is also the academically much more respectable justification that a board starting out with high

standards rigorously applied is much more likely to encourage institutional and multi-campus system reviews that transcend cosmetic gloss for improvement of quality and result in actual program retrenchments. There are already some signs of this in New York, where, facing not only the push of Regential doctoral reviews but also the pull of state and New York City budget cuts, SUNY-Binghampton and SUNY-Albany and the City University of New York have all engaged in serious procedures for internal retrenchment. (For example, 40 percent of CUNY's masters programs are being cut.)

Finally, to return to political considerations, Machiavelli, who too often has been proven uncomfortably accurate in his assessment of political gains and losses, has advised that when unpleasant tasks remain to be done, they should be undertaken aggressively at the outset, before the recipients' ability to resist has come to focus. Then, subsequently, when the situation permits an easing of the degree of intervention, many of the other parties will respond to the relative improvement of affairs (e.g., the movement of the foot from the neck to the stomach), and life can go on with a medium degree of intervention and the recipients' gratitude for the lessening of tensions. It is hard to talk thus with my tongue in my cheek, but lest anyone misunderstand me, I personally favor paying the price of the mellower approach to program review.

Costs and Benefits of Review of Existing Programs

The paucity of the following remarks will reveal: a) that I am no economist; b) that not much has been written on the subject by others; and c) that the whole area may be too new to permit meaningful assessments. It seems clear that the major costs will be the heavy involvement of staff time, administrative support costs for the inter-institutional advisory committee, and the use of outside consultants, if any. (The New York budget for this item, already mentioned, was $50,000 per year.) No board with a very tight budget or overworked staff should undertake this as a new assignment unless it is able to let go something else substantial. (Maximum retrench theory!).

We are also pretty hazy as to the exact benefits of the program discontinuation process. One respondent stated quite persuasively that very little savings resulted, as most faculty were merely transferred to related degree programs. (The SUNY-Albany faculty and student numbers more plainly show.) On the other hand, the Richland reported from Kansas that their process had resulted in the elimination of 61 programs. Surely that has allowed some significant savings? There are also possible benefits already alluded to above, namely, that institutions and multi-campus systems will follow the lead of state board procedures and engage in serious program assessments in many fields where they have shunned for objectives

[illegible]

[illegible]

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